

## THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method of assembling a musical instrument, the instrument having a first major panel and a side wall, the first major panel including a groove or rebate cut into the panel according to a predetermined pattern, the method including the  
5 steps of:
  - providing a first assembly jig adapted to support the panel;
  - laying the panel on the first jig;
  - providing a second assembly jig adapted to hold the side wall in a configuration corresponding to the predetermined pattern of the groove or rebate;
  - 10 placing the side wall into the second jig such that a free edge of the side wall substantially follows the predetermined pattern;
  - applying adhesive to the groove or rebate;
  - bringing the jigs together such that the free edge of the side wall is inserted into the groove or rebate, and
  - 15 applying a compression force across the first and second jigs to urge the side wall into the groove or rebate.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the predetermined pattern of the groove or rebate is configured such that the groove or rebate extends substantially around the periphery of the panel.
- 20 3. The method of claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the first major panel is a front panel of the instrument.
4. The method of any one of the preceding claims wherein the instrument includes a neck component projecting in a direction away from the side wall and at a predetermined orientation relative to the first major panel, wherein the first  
25 assembly jig is also adapted to support the neck component in said predetermined orientation, and wherein the method includes the steps of:
  - laying the neck component on the first jig such that a base part of the neck component overlies a part of the first major panel; and
  - adhering the neck component to the first major panel.

5. The method of claim 4, further including the step of adhering the side wall to a side portion of the neck component.

6. The method of any one of the preceding claims wherein the instrument includes a second major panel having a groove or rebate cut therein and this groove or rebate has the same predetermined pattern as the groove or rebate in the first major panel, and wherein the method further includes the steps of:

removing the second jig from the side wall;

applying adhesive to the groove or rebate of the second major panel;

placing the second major panel onto an edge of the side wall;

providing a third assembly jig adapted to engage the second major panel;

placing the third jig over the second panel; and

applying a compression force across the first and third jigs to urge the first major panel, the side wall and the second major panel together.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the second major panel is a back panel of the instrument.

8. The method of any one of the preceding claims, further including the step of removing excess material from the first and/or second major panel after being adhered to the side wall.

9. A musical instrument including a major panel and a side wall, the major panel having a groove or rebate cut into the panel according to a predetermined pattern, and an edge of the side wall being secured within the groove or rebate.

10. The musical instrument of claim 9 wherein the predetermined pattern of the groove or rebate is configured such that the groove or rebate extends substantially around the periphery of the panel.

11. A method of assembling a musical instrument, the instrument having a front panel, a back panel and a side wall extending there between, the front and back panels each having a groove or rebate extending substantially around its periphery for receiving an edge of the side wall, the method including the steps of:

placing adhesive into each groove or rebate;

inserting opposing edges of the side wall into the grooves or rebates of the front and back panels; and

applying a compression force to urge the panels and side wall together.

5 12. A musical instrument including a front panel, a back panel and a side wall extending there between, the front and back panels each having a groove or rebate extending substantially around its periphery and opposing edges of the side wall being secured within the groove or rebate.

10 13. An assembly jig to facilitate assembly of a musical instrument having a major panel and a side wall, the major panel including a groove or rebate cut into the panel according to a predetermined pattern, the jig being adapted to hold the side wall in a configuration substantially corresponding to the predetermined pattern so as to facilitate insertion of a free edge of the side wall into the groove or rebate.

15 14. The assembly jig of claim 13, wherein the predetermined pattern of the groove or rebate is configured such that the groove or rebate extends substantially around the periphery of the panel.

15. The assembly jig of claim 15, further including means for holding the side wall in an orientation substantially perpendicular to the orientation of the panel.

20 16. The assembly jig of claim 15, wherein the holding means includes pairs of pins configured to extend alongside the side wall to hold it in a fixed orientation.

25 17. An assembly jig to facilitate assembly of a musical instrument having a first major panel and a neck component, the jig including first locating means for positively positioning the panel on the jig and second locating means for positively positioning the neck on the jig, such that the neck component becomes positively positioned with respect to the panel.

18. The assembly jig of claim 17, wherein the jig is configured to support the neck component at a predetermined angle relative to the first major panel.

19. The assembly jig of claim 17 or claim 18, wherein the jig is configured to allow a side wall and a second major panel of the instrument to be secured to the first major panel whilst the first panel is positioned in the jig.

20. The assembly jig of claim 19, further including resilient clamping devices for applying a compression force to urge the second panel, the side wall and the first panel together.

21. A method of making a panel for a musical instrument, the method including the steps of:  
providing a sheet of material; and  
cutting a groove or rebate substantially around a periphery of the sheet for receiving an edge of a side wall of the instrument.

22. A panel for a musical instrument, the panel having a groove or rebate extending substantially around its periphery for receiving an edge of a side wall of the instrument.

23. A method of making a panel for a musical instrument, the method including the steps of:  
providing a substantially uniformly thick sheet of material; and  
routing excess material from the sheet using a computer controlled machine so as to produce a panel having an edge portion which is thicker than a centre portion.

24. The method of claim 23, including the step of cutting a groove or rebate into the edge portion for receiving an edge of a side wall of the instrument.

25. The method of claim 23 or claim 24, further including the step of routing the thickness of at least a portion of the sheet to adjust the acoustic characteristics of the panel.

26. The method of any one of claims 23 to 25, wherein the sheet is routed in such a way as to leave a thicker portion of the panel, extending across at least a part of the panel, to create an integrally formed strengthening brace.

27. A panel for a musical instrument, the panel having an edge portion which  
5 is thicker than a centre portion and having a groove or rebate extending substantially around its periphery for receiving an edge of a side wall of the instrument.

28. A musical instrument including a major panel and a side wall, the major panel having an edge portion which is thicker than its centre portion and having a  
10 groove or rebate extending substantially around its periphery, an edge of the side wall being inserted within the groove or rebate.